

Ours by mlbk53

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Summary: **Contains spoilers for season 3*** Eleven and Joyce discuss their bond.

Ours

WARNING: If you haven't finished watching season 3, then don't read. This fic contains spoilers.

Ours

"Joyce," El whispered approaching the Byers' kitchen in their new house miles away from Hawkins.

Joyce looked up from the noodles she was boiling for dinner. "Yeah, Sweetie. How was school?"

El remained standing in the entry way. "School was good," El shortly replied.

Joyce nodded. Although El's speaking skills have improved, she still has minor struggles. Joyce turned towards El and noticed her biting her nails nervously. "Honey, is everything okay?" she asked.

"I, um, I would like to talk to you. Important talk."

Joyce tensed up. "Alright. Let me just turn this burner off and let's take a seat here at the table, okay?"

El nodded and sat at the table with Joyce sitting next to her. El was avoiding looking at Joyce, so Joyce gently lifted her chin and softly smiled. "Honey, you know you can talk to me about anything, right?"

El nodded.

Joyce tenderly caressed El's cheek with the back of her hand. "You said you wanted to have important talk with me. I'm here. I'm listening. Will is at AV club and Jonathan is at work. It's just you and me here," Joyce said.

"Ever since Hop..." El said before pausing after mentioning Hopper's name.

Joyce froze at the mention of Hop's name. It's been 6 months since

Hopper died when the Russian's portal machine blew up. El doesn't bring up Hopper often, only on nights when she has nightmares and crawls into Joyce's bed crying. Will and Jonathan know not to bring up Hopper in front of El or their mom. It's too much of a sensitive topic, especially since Will found a picture of Hopper under El's pillow and Jonathan found his mom sobbing while holding Hopper's police uniform shirt when he came home early from school. The two females try to act normal, but the Byers boys know they are still grieving.

"Ever since Hop died, you have been here for me," El said.

"Yes, I have," Joyce said urging her to continue.

"You took me with you and the boys when you moved. Why? Why not leave me in Hawkins?"

"Because you are family. I know it was what Hopper would want. I know he would do the same if something happened to me," Joyce replied.

El softly said, "And you treat me like Will and Jonathan."

Joyce smiled. "Yeah. I do. It's because I'm raising you. Like Hop was, now I am."

"Like a mom?" El questioned with her eyes wide staring directly into Joyce's.

Joyce nodded. "Yeah. I guess you could say I'm your de-facto mom."

El's brows furrowed in confusion. "De-facto?" she questioned.

"It means that something is true no matter if it's right or not."

El nodded. "So, you are my mom? Like you are Will and Jonathan's mom."

Without even thinking, Joyce responded, "Yes. I am your mom in every way that matters. The same way I am Will and Jonathan's mom."

El and Joyce shared a smile as Joyce reached out to brush a piece of fallen hair behind El's ear.

El asked, "Does that mean I too can call you Mom?"

Joyce knew the tears were coming, although she tried hard to keep them below the surface. She nodded. "Yes. If you want to call me Mom, I will gladly welcome it. It would be my honor, Sweetheart."

El grinned from ear to ear. The first large smile Joyce has seen in a long time on the teen's face. El leaped from her seat and wrapped her arms tightly around Joyce. "I love you, Mom," she whispered.

Joyce's arms enveloped the young teen who has lost so much. This time Joyce let some tears flow as she replied sweetly, "I love you too, El. So, so much."

Their emotional embrace lingered a little while longer. Before El was about to let go, she once again whispered, "Can I sleep in your room tonight? And maybe you could tell me stories about Hop?"

Joyce squeezed her and replied tearfully, "Of course, Sweetie. I would absolutely love that."

The two separated and El announced she had math homework to do in her room and Joyce went back to cooking dinner as if nothing life changing occurred. No monsters were attacking, Russians weren't shooting at them with guns, but a shift had occurred. Although it was unspoken for sometime, actually acknowledging their bond and love for one another shifted their dynamic. Before this conversation, Joyce was raising Hopper's daughter, but now she's raising Hopper's **and her** daughter. El doesn't have either of their DNA, but that doesn't matter. El's sarcasm and stubbornness was all Hopper and her wonder of the world around her and her innocence was all Joyce. She was theirs. El was Joyce's only tether to Hopper and she will treasure her for the rest of her life.

"Oh, Hop. Our girl is all us. We are so lucky," Joyce said aloud to herself in the kitchen wishing Hopper was here with them.

Meanwhile, oceans away, Hopper was in a cell in Russia screaming

out, "Hey! You shit heads! I have a daughter I need to get back to! I have someone I love deeply back home! Please!"